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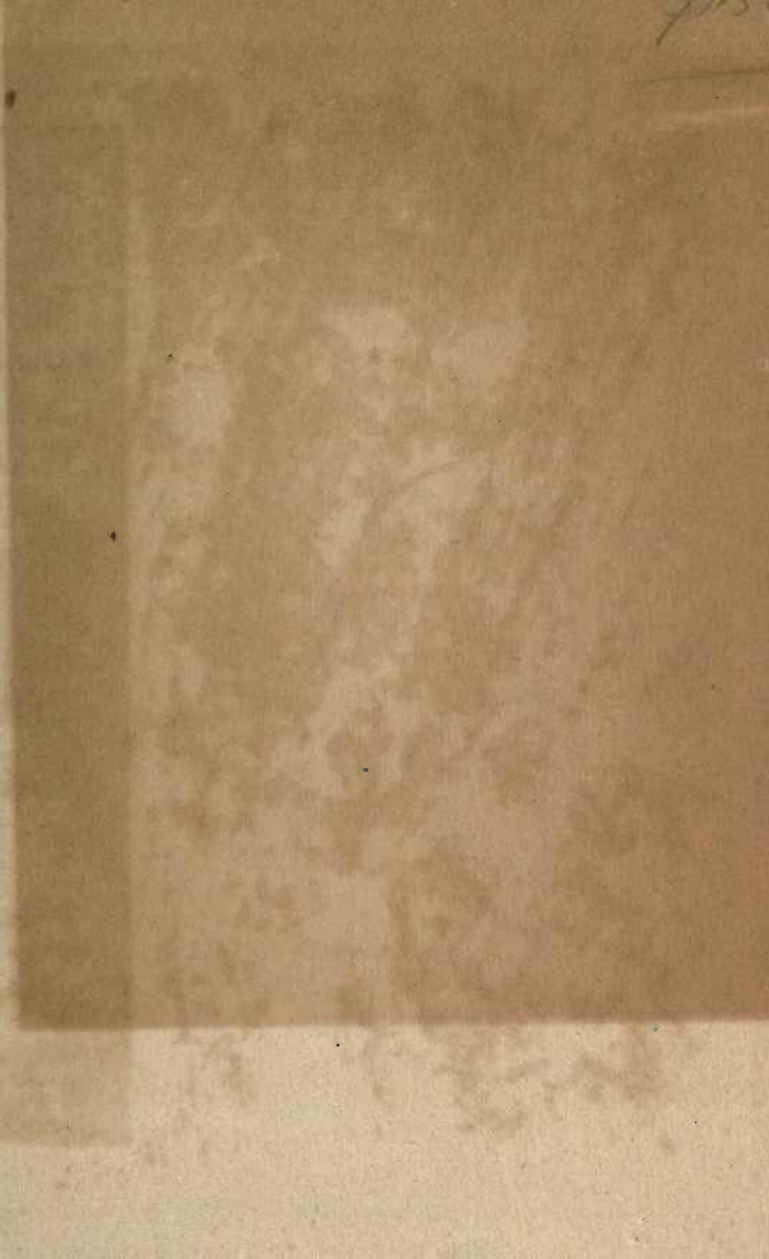
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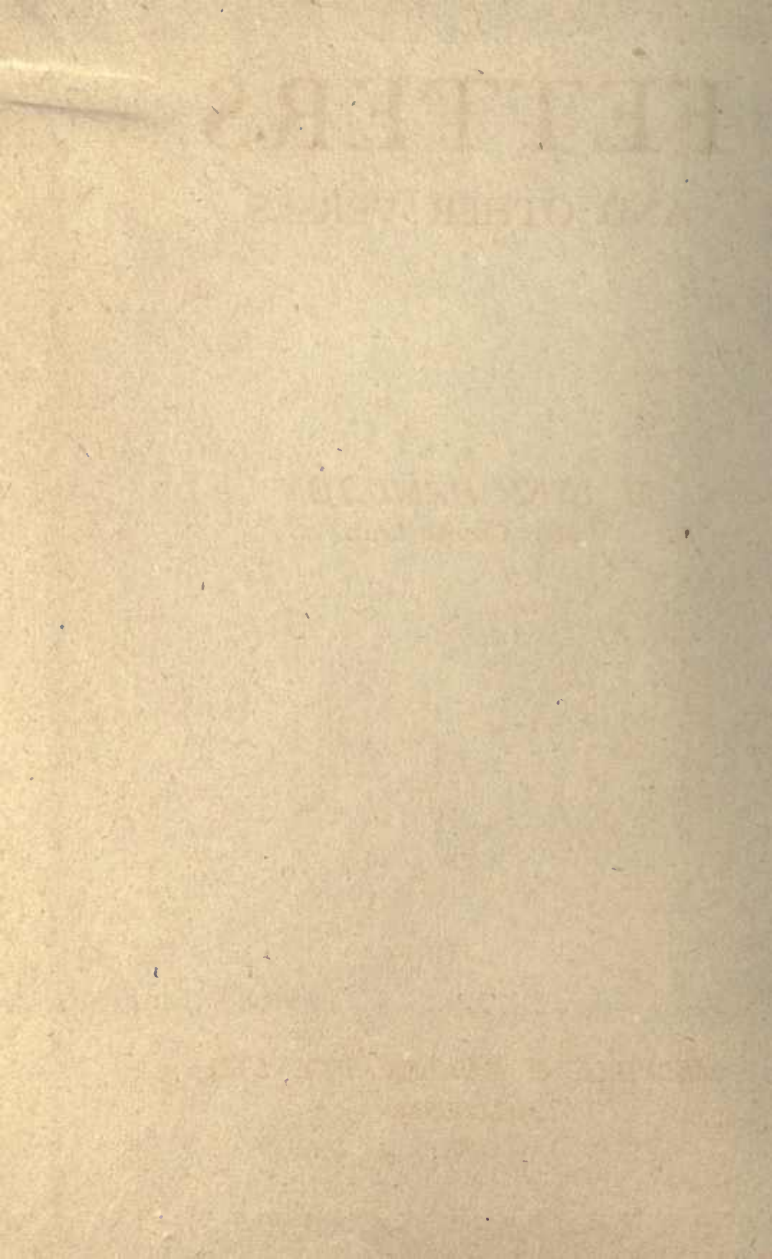


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FETTERS AND OTHER VERSES

M. LYNN HAMILTON





FETTERS

AND OTHER VERSES.

By
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(*Mrs. Charles Lewis*)

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Most of these poems appear for the first time. "Laeta" was published in 1912, whilst "In the Midnight Watch," "Faithful," "N'Importe," "A Dieu," "My World," and "Aileen," appeared in the "Ballarat Courier" before that date.

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TO

MY HUSBAND,

MY BEST AND TRUEST FRIEND

POEMS OF LOVE

FETTERS

Between grim Winter's death and Spring's glad
cry,

There lies a stretch of silence, at whose marge
The feet of Nature hesitate, as 'twere

In dread of ruthless trafficking on Grief—
Since nought may live but first it taste of Death.

Thus stay'd the Universe, or so it seemed

In that small portion of the Globe where Time
Had signed the warrantry.

Yet for this pause,
(So cognisant of nameless, dreadful Doom,)

Was thankfulness within the hearts of two
Who neared the trackless wastes of Life's sad
road.

'Tis Grief indeed when one shrinks
back, amazed

That heedlessly the World can pass, if Pain
Stands naked, staring, shiv'ring, stupefied;
Although methinks 'tis wider-eyed if caught
In narrow meshes of light sympathy.

FETTERS

Whereof, of these, the man was satisfied
That none had guessed the shouldering of Pain,
Withal he bore it hardly: but the maid
Consorted with Regret's poor laggard train,
And deemed the gasp of Nature for her sake.
. And who may tell the chance of Love?

Mayhap

He prances by on high-stepped, timid steed,
To earn the sorry title of Disdain;
Or creeps behind, amid a shadowy gloom,
Unnoticed in the darkness; or he comes
In mask of Friendship, and is welcomed thus,
Without request that he disclose himself,
(Indeed the thought would never be!) There-
fore,
When Love came nigh, and sought the man and
maid,
They neither asked if other guise he donned
Than Friendship's dearest favour.
But so be!
The hand of Circumstance tore down the mask;
And shall we crave excuse for tragedy,
Unless it be we question Providence?

The tale is here

For many days and nights
They crossed the boundless seas, betwixt two
shores,
And he, though mated by the earthly bond,
Had lacked the spiritual, for his wife
Was frivolous, uncaring, worldly-wise,
And latterly had left him all save name.
The woman was alone, for Fate had riv'n
The closer tie; and to her loneliness,
Which bordered on those trackless wastes of
Life,
He came.

FETTERS

....By day the thirsting, famished souls
Found ev'ry need supplied by Comradeship;
And though the far horizon held the same
Indefinite enthrallment, yet therefrom
Rose Hope and Peacefulness, the Heav'n-born
twins;
And restlessly, the man's eyes bade them come,
And Alys stretched both hands to greet them
well.

..... By night the stars were wont to pour their
mead
Of sacred tenderness to fill both Cups
Until they brimmed and mingled their two
streams
—A perfect fusion of sweet Destiny—
Which surely would have blended on his words,
For ever, and continued, happiness.
And Alys wot not why a need still held
Tight rein upon his tongue.

It seemed to him
A gross presumption to enlighten her
On his impediment, almost as if
To presuppose she cared; and timidly
He took the gift of Golden Hours, and loved
Subconsciously the giver; and she gave
With rare delight, nor e'en withheld the charm
Of her whole self—as exquisite a piece
Of Porcelain as the Potter's Hand had e'er
Designed!

* * * *

Ah! fragrant Attar of the Soul
That rises from the broken Vase! Mayhap
The Potter needs such essence, oftentimes,
As inspiration for re-moulding Clay;
And great its purpose if so be; yet I
Can find it in my mind to weep for those
Who help Creation through their shattered
hopes.

FETTERS

Their loss is gain forsooth, and gain to us
Who are not shapen for the choice Perfume
Of God's Distillery; but may He give
Them back the Attar when their Souls are
free
And in this bondage may all honour them! . . .

* * * *

So Fate held high two Bowls, to shatter them.

* * * *

. . . A day it lacked to landing, and the man
Invited of his fellow-passengers
Some two or three, to sup, and Alys came,
As these, half-wistful, had foreseen!

His suite
Was ship-like, but the sitting-room held all,
And stewards waited on his guests, while he
Delighted them with his discourse, anon
Revealing graces that had hitherto
Lain dormant.

But midway one rose to go,
Because of urgent pleas from her good nurse,
Who frightened all the mother-soul in her;
And later, conscious of their thoughtfulness,
The others managed to excuse themselves,
With promises of quick return, and left
The man and maid together—as how oft
Before. But Alys also rose, and said,
“If they return within these minutes few,
The time is not too short for one swift look
On that dark, sullen sea you love so well.”

. . . 'Twas then Fate intervened.

The man knew nought
In that sharp toil of agony but that
The morrow would for ever sunder them;
And, goaded, desperate, he stepped between
The door and Alys, reaching out his arms
Toward her.

"True, I love it mightily,
But more than seven seas are you. To-day
I tug and strain at my slight anchorage
Because your stormy waves have wracked me so!
Should ebb-tide set me drifting, far away
I might discern the beacon that you fired
To lead me home. But are you brave enough
To help me?" And he drew her to his breast,
While Love lit flaming torches in their eyes.

She did not strive for freedom, but stayed still
In his embrace: and dauntlessly she smiled:

"Your words are strange," she softly answered
him,

"But were your soul at stake, my own I'd give
To ransom yours. As Courage is my choice,
And made by God, I am courageous . . . speak."

Then suddenly, he turned aside, and bowed
Himself, in overwhelming grief.

Whereat

She marvelled greatly but kept silence; and
He spoke again. "I cannot ask it, Dear,
Yet Life would fairer be, did it but hold
The mem'ry of a kiss, from you. I dare
Not ask, for I am bound by marriage vows
To one who loves me not, nor ever loved,
Since Fate played havoc with our lives. But you
Need never taste such sorrow: I will pray
Unceasingly for your content. Forgive
Is scarce the word to use between us two,
When Understanding has walked hand in hand.
And yet I use it, for my need is sore.
Of Pardon!"

FETTERS

She stood watching his sad face,
Where resting on his arms along the chair,
And now was forced by sympathy divine
To act as thus she did. She stepped to him
And laid her soft hands on the stricken head,
And gently spoke. "On all that's gone before—
The Past, so full of Joy, so Heaven-sent—
I set my seal!" And here she stooped to kiss
His passive brow: "The Treasury of Thought
Will hold our secret in its golden walls;
And since no other may intrude thereto,
We'll close the coffers evermore To-Day,
That Memory herself may never grudge
The Treasure they contain! . . . My woe is great
That you must suffer, and I—lend no aid.
Forgive me, if the word exists that serves
To ask your leniency for my grave fault—
I had no greater joy than filling all
Your days, this month ago!"

To-morrow morn
When land is cried, 'twill mean we part for aye,
Yet I shall say my farewell here and now.
. . . Good-bye . . . good-bye! . . Ah! I must go.
My eyes
Are blind with suffering for your hurt. Once
more
Good-bye! . . ."

She reached the door before he moved,
Then swift he strode to her, and caught her hands
To hold them, close imprisoned for an Age;
While slowly fell the Potter's Porcelain,
And crashed to fragments on the Floor of
Doom.

FETTERS

"My God!" he said, and o'er again, "My God!"
As if too dazed to hide the stunning blow,—
As if in marvel that so vast a Thing

Had been within his reach, outside his grasp:
... And then she slipped away, nor ever saw
His face again! * * * Wherefore the stable
Earth

Seems gasping frightenedly before Spring's birth.
But after days at sea, the land feels dead—
And Winter's pall is ne'er a lightsome one.

LOVE'S MUSIC

Why do I sing, when lo! my heart is gone?
Why do my lips speak eager to dumb ears?
Because through Space and Time we still are one!
Because the Silence might burst forth in tears!

. And I would have you bravely bear for me,
A smile on your sweet face, a cheering word,
For those who part, and mourn, as we!
For those whose loves lie dead, unheard!
For those whose anguished cries ring through the
 night
When Faith too weak can waft no echoes on!

. But I must sing—for this, that in God's
 sight
We two are travelling, looking to'ard the Sun!

MY WORLD

I said I loved you? Loved! . . ah! how I love!
And your sweet care I crave, as oft before,
Because—without your love—my life would be
A desert waste of loveless loneliness,
Though full to overflowing plenitude
Of emptiness; for you are all my world,
And loved you not, then would my world be
naught.

So could I hate the World!

Yet is my life so full, so bright, so rich,
A summer noontide, sheltered from the heat
Of loveless Sun . . . and I can rest in you,
My Shade, my Sun, my season's gentlest Noon,
My World of worlds, for you to me are All—

My Day, my Night!

Love lives for love, and, Love,
I love the world—because my World loves me!
How could I hate my World?

THE SACRED DOOR OF LOVE.

Entrapped? . . Nay, flutter not, sweet Maid,
Thy white wings beat against the bolted door,
Fast shut at last!
Thereout thou'lt pass no more.

The Key? . . So long as life expands
My mind with thought, so long I'll keep the
Key.
It opes thy Heart!
And It? My rightful fee!

At Death 'twill not be mine? Of truth
My soul doth fear that ever we might part—
We twain must die
E'er I unlatch thy Heart.

Ay! strong the Lock! The Forge was Heav'n,
The Hammers golden, that the Angels swung,
And in God's ears
Were mellowed echoes rung.

No matter who besiege, Disuse
Shall rust the Hinge and close for aye the Door
Which let me in;
Thereout I'll pass no more!

Ah! Sweet, this fitting to thy Lock,
Albeit meagre, fills the empty part
Fate moulded for it,
Yet chanced the World's wide Mart.

THE SACRED DOOR OF LOVE

And keys there be that turn aside
The bolts to God's pure Sanctu'ries,—undo
But fail to lock!—
Gain Heav'n—lose It too!

And thus I stepped inside to find
My wondrous Treasure; pearls thy speech;
And rubies dark
Thy lips, like bow
Of Cupid—beauteous mark!

For Death alone shall we unbar
The guarded Door which shuts our Love within,
Our Holiest!
Without, wait Hate and Sin.

At last thou yielddest, and thy Heart
Is mine for evermore—I keep the Key
With thy consent
And so, thou lovest me?

TO YOU

And thou wilt love, and never breathe a sigh
That charms so brief, so slight, are flitting by?
That Age, advancing, lays her chisel deep
To sear the rounded cheek to hollows steep?

The heart and mind remain, dear Lover mine,
A heart which loves thee more,
Though oft the brine of my base thought,—that
thou couldn't e'er forget
The promises of Youth, brings me regret!

Ah! then thy firm, strong hand will clasp mine
own,
And we shall climb again those hills, wind-
blown,
Which only seem'd to sweep us up to God . . .
Love of my soul, would'st leave those paths
untrod?

Shall we pass by the gap of months, of years,
That showed the end, forever, of our tears?
Can we protest the straitness of the Way
When Christ Himself hath led us day by day?

And if, perchance, in weariness I fall,
Thine arm around, thy heart pressed close, we
call
And wait His answer, as in long hours past
His Love will help and strengthen to the last!

DEAR

The pureness of your love is my one prayer,
My hope, the light of clear resolve which glows
Brave soul, in thy blue eyes.
The Lord Himself holds us by hand; I dare
To ask Him, of His Love, the twain to close
And bind with His strong ties!

The force of your great love soon overpowers,
And unresisting now, you bear me back
To rest my heart on you.
Black clouds are gone—brief warming Spring-
time showers
That woke the tender flowers. If I lack
Denial, I am true!

For long your burning will constrained my love,
Your strength broke down my shield, "You,
must," you said;
Yet pleading conquered—"Do."
So gladly now I yield. From high above
Fall whispers as the storms pass on . . . "Your
head
Is weary. Rest it too!"

BEYOND THE VALLEY

Beyond the valley and the tree-shades streaks
golden light,
Behind are misty deeps of shadow, and cruel
night!

And you and I slow pace together, heart link-
ing heart,

Through blackest depths of misty tree-trunks,
where we must part!

Aback, dim ghosts of Fear-shapes linger, and
blaze the trail;

Ahead, the darkness fades and softens our faces
pale.

Beyond this valley of our love-light,

Beyond the Night,

Abruptly rends the vale a mountain's
Far-shining height.

Ah! Sweet, the shades that pass *are* spectres:
love glows before!

Let this To-day be sealed in Heaven, for ever-
more.

POEMS OF PATHOS AND LOVE

BEREFT

Death! The cold, calm gloom of Death!
Thy fevered pulses, how they madly beat
Their aching throbs in heart, in eye, in brain,
Until the silence of the Dark creeps on,
And hides thy heaving form beneath the pall
Of everlasting Chill!

Great God of Love, behold this stricken home!
In mercy lift the winding doubts that bind
To utter madness these torn, gaping wounds!
In mercy pour Thy tender healing peace
On souls, who—frantic—dash against such bars
As, saving, hem them in!

Is this the frowning portal men think Death?
Is this the verge, beyond which stretches waste
On dreary waste they call Eternity?
Must we pass through, to wander, desolate,
In prison regions where the slaughtered Christ
Went to preach Liberty?

Nay! The sufferer is dumbly answering
Each cry! Her eyes, so dim one brief space
since,
Reflect the Glory of those dazzling Spheres—
So eager are they, and so far they strain,
Seeking to pierce yon heavy Veil,
Which drapes the Infinite,

BEREFT

That now she sees! There is but One to see!
He beckons! Can she do else than follow?
And where He leads, is't strife and anguish there?
Her lips are parting! see the welcome radiant,
The fleeting smile to bid us all farewell,
Against our advent too

....Farewell, brave lamb, the Shepherd cares
for you!
....The Gate is narrow, but thy Soul is pure!
Pass on, and gain within the Fold, His
Flock!

A flash—the Veil between us swift is riven—
I tremble as the brilliant Light streams
through!
I shudder now is Gloom!

All gloom...all chill....all cold—as Death it-
self—
Are we who stand around...or so we seem,
So black, so deep, the Shadow that has fall'n!
Yet life is mine. In bitter agony
They cling to me, their grief so pitiful,
Is choked in utterance!..How warm and fresh
Their tears!...Bereft!...Bereft!...
They cling to me!...
How young they are...they cling....I..will be
brave.....

IN THE MIDNIGHT WATCH

This morn, the toll of passing night
Had scarce forth mourned belated hours—
Which lived their petty life, so bright,
Sunlit with brilliant love-bloomed flow'rs
Of hope, of trust, of weariness for thee,
Of eagerness to share thy love, unset
And ever shining, though I restless be—
The knell of one day dead, I say,
Had barely proved its ling'ring death,
And I, on thine own couch, could lay
My tired head, when in a breath
The life of yet another's strength was born
To me!
The drowsy signs of slumber sped,
That thou beside might watch with me to dawn.

Though thou are far on Egypt's plain
Of burning sands—white-heat the glare—
I felt thy presence; and the pain
Of thee so lonely, too, with care
Perchance that I might cross the border-land
Whence all thy pleading could not call me back,
Provoked the scalding tear, the trembling hand,
Bemoaning cries from out my heart,
That God would of compassion bring
Thee safe to home! With what a start
Did I the cov'ring backward fling,
And spring to feel thy reassuring clasp
Support me through the clinging, pressing dark!
Black desolation—oh, that empty grasp!

IN THE MIDNIGHT WATCH

Thus crept I, shiv'ring, to my rest,
Close drew the coverlet; but still
The aching longing for thy breast;
Well-nigh quite credulous my will
Became—that stretching forth again I would
Indeed be met by thy dear hand.
But fear imprison'd, bound me helpless ere I
could.

Yet love, thy spirit—if it were
Thy spirit that so filled the room!—
Brought peace, of troublous kind!
The mere conception of pre-figured doom
Up-raised the latent force which can resist
E'en deadliest fear for thy sake, husband mine;
And groping, searching thee, I did persist!

Still emptiness! . . . still fleeting mist
Back curl'd from wand'ring, waving hands!
Far greater fulness than I wist
Had close possessed my soul. Strong bands
Invisible, yet tight'ning, forced me on,
Compelled me to the chase of wreathing shapes,
Until, exhausted, my frail strength half-gone,
I knelt to pray! Around, thine arm
Came stealing, and I clasped it tight,
Sobbed out my grief—this false alarm—
And censured thee for caused affright—
Low spoke thy name, and rose me to my feet
To steal a loving circlet round thy neck—

Sharp agony! . . . Again they, empty, meet!
Then through sad silence of my soul
There mocked the night-bird's twittering hoot!
I staggered—blind, elusive goal,
Its tapping on the glass! Thy foot
Would loud have trodden had it been the call
That heralds, Love, thy homeward-coming late
On nights the Earl detains thee at the Hall.
Rememb'rest thou? "Sweet heart," 'twas said,

IN THE MIDNIGHT WATCH

"Yon owl's shall be our signal cry,
Unless they bear me to thee—dead.
And then! Why, even he might die!"

The grey dawn slow chinked in betwixt the
slits

Of gaping blind, and still I trembling lay
Like cowering moth before it weakly flits.

The grey dawn! How it peered at me,
Half grinning for my brain's perplex!

But grey it was—not sunnily

Its smile broke! Ah, the cold reflex
Of all the pulsing days a-throbbing fire,
Of glowing love, of fiercest rapture wild.

And now—the damping, sodd'ning, oozing mire!

Could I have outward shut the sight,
Then would the cruel fears inscribing this

Have never, by my life, seen light—
My closing eyes inked the abyss!

All shaking, to the icy floor I set
My foot, and up the window clanged;

Chill floods

Again poured in on me. . . . Ah, wings so wet,

Clipt wings! Yea, felt I than before
That helplessness o'erpowering flight

When one would lift to shelt'ring core
Yet tarries, for some quashing might.

And as the scene familar grew, mine eyes
Close roved to search fresh-fallen snow, mayhap
For foot-prints pressed by thee! But there
he lies—

The owl, whose hoot we both have heard,

As side by side we bowed the knee,
Or spoke his call ours too! Poor bird,

Weak-crumpled up, more frightened me
Than all the tale of last night's sad alarms.

Ah, dearest heart, return. Mine own hath
sought

Thine, dark and light,—has sought, swift-break-
ing calms.

IN THE MIDNIGHT WATCH

Last night I wrote of what had feared
All thought of rest, of sleep from me:
This eve, though early mists have cleared,
The black of storms, fall'n heavily,
Hath brought the leaden cold of frozen snow
To ice each gushing hope that still you live—
My God, for word of thee! Thaw not fresh
flow——" * * *

This much they read, when had been found
Her gaunt, cold body by the tower
Where she had waited for first sound
Of messenger, from hour to hour.
They read the last great agony, where pain
Had graved a bitter smile on her sweet mouth!
They read on parchment-sheet the tale again.

Deep eyes filled with a nameless dread
(Which ebbing life had glazed and set)
Stared lustreless! And for the tread
Of mounted man, her hand was met
To hollow a first echo in the ear
Shell-pink on white of chilly, bloodless death!
. . . In silence bore they him to share her bier!

NÖNÉ

At the gateway 'twixt life and death
Gladly I waited:
There from the threshold watched
Two whom I hated.

....How soon their words poured wine
In shy, swift rushes!
....Thrilled each the other's pulse
By their warm blushes!

Yea, at the brink I paused . . .
(O! Life unsated!)
Ere back to death I turned . . .
(God! how I hated!)

Ill-starred, my Nöné, we,
Ill-starred, and fated!
Soon through my clay to be
Happier mated!.....

EARTH TO EARTH

Drift, drift, drifting down....Oh, the summer
years!

Autumn leaves are falling fast, sweet golden
tears!

Nancy, can you see them fall?

Autumn weaves your golden pall:

Nance, are you below?

Drip, drip, dripping down....Oh! the ruddy
leaves!

Death is busy gathering his crimson sheaves!

Nancy, did you feel Him nigh?

Bleeds my heart in every sigh:

Nancy, do you know?

Drift, drift, shall I drift down the lonely years,
All my life to hear the fall of blood-red tears?

Nancy, on your grave so cold,

Autumn veins my tears with gold:

Darling, can you see?

Hush!....Hush!....Snowflakes drift softly to
the ground,

Hectic leaves grow white and still, on ev'ry
mound.

Springs of grief no longer flow,

Anguish hides her wells in snow....

Nancy waits for me!

UNCHALLENGED

Where wilderness of grass and wild broom
throve,

Near limpid water, thrall'd by many a reed,
A lonely pine, whose height reached solitude,
Evoked, and merited, a passing heed.

At moon-rise, when across the shimmering lake
Far distant stars shed feeble gleams,
Or at faint twilight, when in clumsy flight
Bats passed, all heavily, like evil dreams,
The pine cast high its summit bough, and laughed
Among its clustered needles, for sheer joy,—
Because, eve after eve, at dusk there came,
Like errant knight and lady—maid and boy.

Where wilderness of grass and wild broom throve,
Near silent water, thrall'd by many a reed,
He promised faithfulness, though far he rove,
And she, believing him, paid earnest heed.

So waned the days, and then she walked alone,
And tenderly the pine breathed lover's rue,
To heal her solitary sorrowing,
Though perfect trust was balm for heart so
true;

Yet comfort drew she thence, till Silence made
Of grief a god-like favour, and, the while,
Though something seemed to wither it, the pine
In gentle hope still wore its heavenly smile.

. . . Where wild spear-grasses and the gay broom
throve,

Near stagnant water, where breeds pestilence,
A lonely, shrivell'd pine, stark-branched and
dead,

No longer comforts, smiles, or weeps or knows
A maid whose step is slow, whose joy is fled.

ASHES

What matter it, if we have loved so well
That, ere the years of absence passed,
Our love passed too?
The passion of Love's flame leaped fierce, but fell
To smould'ring ashes—for too fast
Do young souls woo.

What matter it, if God we trusted so,
Withheld His All-wise Plan awhile,
And let us care?
Our hearts embraced, wherever It should go,
That Holy Will! . . . Look up; your smile
Can speed my pray'r.

What matter if that night were steeped in pain,
That saw us part, and caught those vows,
Our threefold gird?
Yet is the anguish less? . . . or more the gain? . . .
Now you are come with "whys" and "hows"—
Grey ashes stirr'd.

BECAUSE WE KNEW NOT

We passed each other in a present dream,
And I, for my part, knew that Past there was,
Else why should Destiny, so interwoven, seem
To cleave my sombre path with Mem'ry's
gleam.

Identities unknown, we passed, yet he
Discerned o'er me the veil of Life's queer maze
Where souls are baffled: had our Fate been free,
How swiftly had we met? What ecstasy!

We paused, and he part turned to smile, but drew
not near,
Though in profoundest depth my heart guessed
well
He felt the trembling advent of Love's holy fear!
Then I passed on, because unknown!.. Yet he
is dear!

A BREATH AGO

A breath ago, and my child was here,
Sweet babe with the deep-sea eyes.
A breath ago!.....Yet without one tear
My blest wee darling dies!

A breath ago and there hovered Love,
Strong-winged, o'er his sun-crowned head:
A breath ago!....Now a wounded dove
Falls—fluttering, gasping,—dead!

It came in a sudden lowering down,
Swept on me and by, in a breath,—
'Twixt his laughing cry and my idle frown
Stepped suddenly forth—this death.

A breath ago—and my babe was here!
Ah! How can I close those eyes?
....A breath ago had my heart no fear,....
God, pity its desolate cries!

PASSING

Flickering shadows on the ghostly walls,
By spasms born of dying fire,
And in my dreaming ear, my dear Love calls,—
Of too-brief life, soul, essence and desire.

Seething and whisp'ring winds besiege and cry,
Swift rustle on, creep back once more,
Toss nearer fitful steps, then toss them by,
Though hot Hope craves her life—hope weak
and sore!

Yet in a silence, leaning tenderly,
So close above me that a breath
Burns on my brow,—my heart grips icily,—
She stoops in passing....Oh! my Love, my
Life....gone out with Death!

ALONE

Deserted, doomed am I! And he who vowed
A weariless, unending watch of trust,
Hath flung all vows aside, and gone, in scorn
Of my undying love! So breaks the crust
Sometime, of loftiest Mount's high-reared head,
Yet those perceiving, look not underneath,
Where glint and glow the liquid fires, outspread,
Of melting ores, of changing hues,
Whilst gold is purified.

God give thee dues,
Thou faithless one! No man art thou,
Or hadst thy father-instinct mutely told
Thy shame eternal in desertion! Sold
Then am I to him who stays to raise me,
Be he devil, angel, god....to thee it matters not!
Thank Heaven thou art free!

LOVE'S PRICE

They took you, Darling One, demanding pay
Such Ransom as my Love could give: they
asked
My Life!.....And I swift paid!.....Come day,
go day,
Full willingly I gave it! Then they tasked
Me furthermore, commanding instant cease!
...I, loving you so much,...pay...my Soul's
...Peace....

FAITHFUL

Pure clouds of snow, in joy, kissed Heav'n's blue
When troth was giv'n... "E'en DEATH will find
us true!"

Noon's leaden, angry sky, a green-grey sea,
And I, so desolate, watch still for thee!

A silvered calm at night, a crescent moon,
One longing, yearning cry—"Ah! come, Love,
soon!"

A gasping light with Dawn, a seething sea,
Upturned thy battered face.... I go to thee....

N'IMPORTE

From a flash in the sky,
On a sob and a sigh,
Love was born.

By a shudder of fear
And a dashed away tear,
Love was torn.

In a tremble of haste
For its bitter-sweet taste,
Love was tried.

With her sob—and his sigh—
And one lingering cry,
Love had died.

AL-MANSOR

(Founded on a Persian Fable.)

Each hour of mine that I have loved
A perfect pearl the tale has told,
Whose lustre lingers in a vase of purest gold.

Each friend of mine that I have proved
By Life's stern test, both true and strong,
I placed there too—a diamond of sparkling song.

Each day that dies without regret,
By sweetest opals I recall,
But in my vase are few, so few, though I have
counted all.

Each moment that true joy was mine
A single pearl holds in its heart,
And glowing rubies, rich and red, lie there apart.

If I am called to share my wealth
With careworn trav'lers by Life's way,
From my great treasures I shall take my perfect
Day.

Its sacred coffer is a kiss
That dimmed her eyes—those blazing stars!—
I have no gem to equal this, in Mem'ry's jars.

POEMS OF LIFE AND LOVE

SPRING-TIDE

In the Garden of Life lay a shady dell,
Where the Rivers of Passion met,
And the Gardener ever tended it well,
For a plant in the soil was set.

The Spate from the Hills of a mad Desire
Rushed, leaping, to swallow it up;
And the Rivers ran red in a bed of fire,
To wither the Lily's young cup.

To the swirl of the soul-drowning Flood of Flame
The Gardener stretched out his Hand,
And called to the Flower that knew Him by
Name—

“Lean on Me, and then thou wilt stand.”
* * * *

Oh! the Garden of Life has a shady dell
Where the Rivers of Passion died;
And held is the Spate of the storms of Hell,
In the Gardener's wounded Side.

Near the Plant that lay buried in sunless mire,
With its roots fast bound in God,
Sanctified—fragrant—though tinged by the Fire,
Blooms a beautiful Golden Rod!

AFTERMATH

(The return of the man to the woman he deserted....she welcomes him as a friend.... but his long-smothered ardency bursts anew into flame, at sight of her.)

I hold a leaf—a sunset-coloured leaf—

Between my nerveless fingers, while I thank
The kindness of the heart that with a brief
“I waited long!” un-nerved me; and I drank
For very Shame’s sake of the proffered cup.

....So small a leaf, yet Autumn’s tender glance
Shed gold on gentle crimson. Faith! I muse
Enraptured, for the lambent passions dance
Through her sweet smiles...What love o’er
all she strews
As each is bidden closer draw, and sup!

Wee leaf, (so gravely pluckt again to greet
Me by dumb eloquence of thought and grace)
So—gently crimson is her heart’s warm beat,
So—golden tresses hallow her soft face,
And oh! the glowing brightness of her hearth!

.....What Summer splendour heralded my
Fall?...

Long years I lost, nor can I them recall!
...Faith dares me plead, e’en now, an after-
math....

MY SOLDIER KNIGHT

Right through the din of battle
And the clash of a warring world,
My soldier-knight came riding,
His pennant red unfurled,
And his calm face, splendid, god-like,
Sin's legions backward hurled.
My dream-knight came slow riding—
Through the clash of a warring world.

About his kingly shoulders
Hung a cloak of vivid red,
And lost souls stretched their hands up
To drag him 'mongst their dead:
But he rode his way uncaring,
Nor downward bent his head,
My soldier-knight undaunted,
In his cloak of blood, new shed!

And I saw their gaunt hands clutching,
I heard their piteous wail,
And I knew that his breath came quickly—
And I prayed that he would not fail. . .
Though the briars uprose to stay him,
Though he wore no shirt of mail,
My splendid knight rode onward,
Nor heeded their demon wail!

.But when the din of battle
Lay far behind this world,
My soldier brave came riding,
His pennant loosely furled;
And the face of such god-like beauty
Was white where the soft hair curled.
...Then he drew his rein, to listen,
To the cries from the nether world.

MY SOLDIER KNIGHT

And his courage slipped behind him
For he turned aside to hear
The voices so alluring,
The whispers ever near,
And their claws reached up and held him,
So his strength, that knew no fear,
Was lost, as the strength of Samson
When *he* turned aside to hear!

(Ah! God, when hurts are mortal
How we choke and gasp and sigh,
And our tears fall hot, like blood-drops,
When we see a soul drift by.
This stab in my heart is anguish,
Wilt heed a mother's cry?
Give Angels charge concerning him,
For the death of his soul is nigh!)

* * * *

My soldier-knight is coming,
But his face is worn and sad,
And his scarlet cloak is trailing,
Where rent by furies mad,
But I see his hands unsullied,
I see—and it makes me glad!
So kingly, so potential,
Is my knight—scarce more than lad.

* * * The uphill climb is ending,
His feet are near the crest;
On the hilltop Love is waiting,
And Light and Joy and Rest.
He faces Hope's sweet dawning,
The past lies in the West.
In a cloak of pure-white glory
My victor Knight is drest!

The Shadow of a day that is gone

An Arab's tent-fire, and the ashes warm remain,
To tell he tarried overnight,
But rose with Dawn, his Wanderlust again
A fever in his blood, a burning, restless might,
A nomad's heritage of fierce—of baffling pain.

At night-fall, shepherds' cries and bleating sheep,
A hasty fold, a swift-pitched tent,
And Dusk comes, soft and chill, o'er sands that
seep;

While red camp-flares have flick'ring sent
Their warning to the wolfish eyes that watch
and never sleep;

Then Night, and distant lights, and sheep close
pent.

So Morning breaks, and ashes warm but dead,
are left

To tell of shepherds passed, who graze their
flocks

On hills afar, above the seeping sands, where cleft
On cleft of steep cliff-faces are bestrewn with
rocks.

And Life is scarcely more!..A mark to show
That Hopes were pitched, that flaming Pas-
sions flared,

And restless hearts broke camp at Dawn, and lo!
They steal away like shadows, e'er the Sun has
bared

His silver disc. And through the mists aglow
GOD bends to read the marks of how we fared,
And watches if the Heights of far-off Hills are
dared,

Or if we linger on the barren plains below.

A DIEU

A prayer to last till dawn of Day, or for an age
of many dawns;

A hope, in parting, that so may the Night of
Life bring Heavenly morns

With God—*A Dieu*.

God be with you! oft said—"Good-bye," and
watch 'twixt thee and me—"Mizpah,"

Bid travellers each, with smile or sigh, this
prayer, this safeguard near and far,—

A Dieu! To God!

Those who have crossed the border-land, those
who but speak to straight pass on,

Those seas divide, hold still the band of Friend-
ship's love, when they are gone

To God! A Dieu!

Should hands that held a loved one close, or hearts
that lack a double beat

Feel vacancy, e'er impulse goes, they press around
His Word, and meet

With God, *ADIEU*.

TO A FRIEND

Calm is thy sleep, but calmer still, the grave
Wherein thou'lt take thy last and longest sleep:
Yet thou canst wait Life's eventide with brave
Undaunted heart, provided that thou keep
To-day as if 'twere respite thou didst crave,
Ere Twilight summoned thee to Shadows deep!

CAPT. R. F. SCOTT, R.N., C.V.O., F.R.G.S.

(March 29th, 1912.)

The rigid Sentinel of silence keeps
Unfalt'ring watch where splendid Fame is
held;
But England boasts the fervid, lasting weld
Of Glory's immolation!

Fast he sleeps,
This knightly leader of heroic men,
Thrice gallant Scott, on land his tomb will claim,
(Though gained by primal right in Norway's
name!)

An idle continent, a frost-bound fen.
So dare this throw of chequered Fate deprave
What Pathos blazons on his 'scutcheon twice?
Yet Britain's heart deplores him, young and
brave,

Undaunted by dark terrors of grim ice,
Whose kingly courage shrank not from the price
Of Life itself! . . . Calm Duty marks his grave.

LIKE TIRED WAVES

Like tired waves, the Years slip home to Doom,
Whose Cliffs will rend and break each hoary
crest;

And tired souls, the fettered and the free,
Drift wearily and wanly to their rest.

O'er bitter heart-ache stumbling Years will flow,
O'er rocks whereon the salt-sweet seaweeds grow,
O'er woe unfathomed, and beyond the Gloom!

Oh! waves of Time who lave Eternity,
I launch my dauntless Hope on Life's rough sea.

TO A.S.M.M.,

The tawny grass, and amber eyes
Of wild-flowers blinking lazily....
A stretch of placid water, willow-girt,
A lustrous sky of blue, flecked hazily,
And peaceful rest;
So reads the picture of this morn,
Like other days of idle peace,
Of comradeship the happiest and true,
When outside cares, and hurts of life, surcease;
Such hours are fragrant, and such friends are
blest.

TO A.S.W.

How glad the Day!....The Sun now parts the
Mist,
Caressing tenderly the silent Lake,
And decks each Tree with pearls of dew, love-
kissed,
And bids my Heart be glad, for Beauty's sake.

Oh! happy Day, now Earth returns with Light,
For Darkness seemed to hide her boundless
Sea:
Yet Happy Heart, for Faith—more grand than
Sight—
Reveals vast worlds in Night's Infinity.

SPRING AND A GLAD HEART

Did you see him—eyes alight? He went by this
way.

Did you note his face, as bright as a summer
day?

Did you hear him? He could sing like some
full-throat bird,

And his laugh?—sweet, lovesome thing, every sad
heart stirr'd;

Do you know him? Then he stayed overnight
with you?

Ah! you guess it! one dear maid makes his
sky so blue!

THE ENDLESS SONG

There is a song that swells the sky; whose notes
Lift mountain-heads, and waves so bright,
....O'erflow from countless feathered throats,..
Until stars tremble forth the strain by night!
One song, a burst of mighty honouring praise,
Attuned to soothe Earth's sternest mood,
Whose harmonies—through endless days—
Sweet Nature sings—"Ah! Everything is
Good!"

EPIC OF LOVE AND TRUST

LAETA

De profundis.

The Road of Day, athwart the desert Sky,
Beside a dimpled trail of tender Sighs,
Held prints of blood! for angered Zephyrus
With cloven hoofs now lashed the great Sun's
face

As low he sank; and over earth there drooped
A curtain grey, a silent misty shroud.

To watch the death-bed throes a man had turned;
Whose troubled, brooding eyes obscured the soul
That heretofore stood bravely forth. A breath
Escaped him, slow and shudd'ringly: anon
He stepped within the vestibule, on switch'd
A brazen galaxy of lights to mock
The dying God of Dawn—yet in a room
Where Darkness lay, his anguish'd eyes he hid.

Across the stillness smote a murmuring sound
Like hiving bees, and brilliant spheres aglow
Cast glitt'ring phantoms on the picture-glass
That countlessly bedecked those walls
Wherein he had so recently withdrawn.

Then, silvery cadenced, rang a woman's
laugh,
His wife's!—and purring with fresh life, the car
Leapt on to meet the twilight, velvet-shod.
...Then swift she came! He heard her ask
for him,
Exclaim at his unwonted earliness,
But, since he'd needed her, if she had long
Been gone?....Sweet, palpable anxiety!...

So, on the last faint echo of her step,
As she ascended to be gowned afresh,
He entered then the library, and bowed
His head upon his arms where leant he low
Against the mantelshef.

The blazing coals
Leered up at him, and once they laughing caught
What flashed, as hastily he brushed away
A sharp, hot tear....

The clock a quarter showed
Before the gong's deep chimes should notify
Of their repast, when down she softly trailed,
In silken draperies, and paused amazed,
Upon the threshold, seeing him she loved
Thus sorrow-bent. A hot fear clutched her throat,
Suggesting mortal ill for this dear life
She treasured so.

But at those quick'ning feet
To where he stood, he neither moved nor signed
That he had heard her—Oh! the pang of it!

The flames cast pallid shadows in her eyes,
Now horror-full, and smoked in gaseous jets
To blur the suff'ring 'neath her low demand,
“What ails you?”....Lifelessly he turned at
length

And met the haunting grief of her sad smile
With question-parried answer, “What should ail
The man who loves you, Laeta? Loneliness
Is oft precursor of more serious hurt,
And all this afternoon spelt Solitude,
Though I had thought to learn more Happiness,
And left the Court at three, to seek such school
From you who teach!”....

“And I,” said wistfully,
“By noon had grown so weary for your voice,
I planned a sure surprise, and to your rooms
I went at three, but found you were gone forth

On Duty, so they said, nor would be back!
 Thus, leaving there, Sir Hedley motored past,
 Yet stayed his car to ask me would I ride.
 . . . How could I guess the want of me there was
 In my own home, where I had languished so
 Throughout your absence? . . . Cruel Fate perverse,
 To parch our love when both longed thirstily!"

On tip-toe as she spoke, she raised her face
 For mead of consolation, but his lips
 Were cold on hers, and Grief still cloaked his
 eyes!—

"Last night, Sir Hedley Orme, to friends of his
 Implied you feigned a 'charming innocence,'
 —They told me while at lunch in the same Club
 But this noon-tide, repeating that remark
 Which you let pass, 'twas said, in wonderment."

Then Laeta's cheeks grew white: she nearer
 crouched

On one knee by the fire to warm her hands;
 The veins across her temples stood in blue
 Uneven knots; and noticing—he paused.

"Continue! I am listening close, and hope
 To have a limning clear of how he fell,
 This graceless scamp, who tainted my fair fame!"
 Then quiv'ring fury pent itself behind
 His cold-said words, "Yes, were vendettas rife,
 His sightless orbs might even now be turned
 On Purgatory, and his voice be stilled
 For evermore; yet his sole fault, recall,
 Was idle carrying of devils' wares!"

"He told what had been said?" she asked, for he
 Was sunk in reverie, and very low
 He spoke the hateful thing, awaiting, pained,
 The mantling of her tender cheeks in flame,
 But no flush came: pure Innocence lay white
 On her up-turn'd face, in her clear eyes.

Then high he raised his head, superbly straight,
And said all gladly, "Have they lied so far
To perjure Woman's ignorance? I knew
You understood not——"

"Stay!" she cried, and held
Beseeching hands to him; "You must not lie
On my account! For, Dear, if meaning vile
Lay in those twisted words, I saw it there,
And to deceive, (as all true women should
Who fear uncleanness!) let it rest as clean,
To shame the poisoner by Innocence.

Yet twin Deceit, if now he mocks my
sight,
Believing that I saw, and turned blind eyes
To make the walking past less difficult.
But if 'tis so, O Rupert, I must speak
With him, alone, and show the barèd truth—
He now has forced the bandage from my eyes!"

The man bent his great height, and wrapt her
close

Within the grip of passion's strength, and she
As tightly clung!

Then craved he brokenly
Her gracious clemency for his mistrust;—
"How base to e'er have doubted you, my wife,
When life, these six short years, has been like joy
That heathens thanked their gods for fearfully!"

She freed herself, and gently chided him
For his remorse: "Full well I know a heart
Has never beat so true in human love
As yours! You taught me how to love: through
you

I reached God's Throne and felt the Touch divine
That cleanses souls; inspired by your great faith
At which height have I failed? Ah Dear! you
say

My feet cross Heaven's Threshold oft and oft,
Yet whose the strength that ope'd the Door for
me?"

Thereat she raised her face, irradiant
—"Your very faith, thus, made you doubt, or else
The matter had escaped you, heeding nought.
... The world is wide, you taught me so, and wide
My love; yet when we two are alone, I fain
Would shut the very angels out, who watch
The sacred Flame enshrined in our two hearts,
And bar the sanctu'ry to all save God!"

Her voice sank to a whisper, for her mind
Swept out to wider issues of their love,
Whence Grief had come—"In this great holiness
Methinks Almighty Purpose granted boon
To have denied admittance, though we craved
Those fragile, toddling feet of His least Lamb!"

Two limpid drops welled in her sea-deep eyes,
And jewell'd the fringing lashes; then the man
Protectively but dumbly drew her near,
And from their dizziness of anguish, loud
The changes of the gong, cathedral-bell'd,
Now summoned them, re-echoing the Past,
As wedding peals to him, though knells to her.

Fide et amore.

Transluscent onyx of electric globes
On silver dazzled, and on damask snow,
Whilst deeper shades of pink caught in the cups
Of crystal clear, which held a rich red wine.
Immobile stood the butler, save when tasked
To serve those beings who composed his world,
The master, Rupert Cholmondeley, and his
bride,—

For so this man looked on the winsome girl
Who came to mistress the great gloomy house

LAETA

When scarce eighteen!

And light her laughter rang,
Yet lighter Rupert's, at her littlest jest!
So dined fair Laeta and her noble Lord,
Amid a chime of tinkling merriment,
Nor guessed the servitor how near had swoop'd
The crimson-taloned, sated harpy—Doubt.

They rose, as eight boomed from the vestibule
Wherein the ancient clock still ticked away
The meagre fractions of man's earthly span,
And Laeta drew her husband to the fire
That now burned gleefully, and asked of him
Permission to accomplish what she willed.

...A smile was hovering o'er his lips,
But, so elusive, that the quiver stayed
And straight defined a horrid, wond'ring hurt.
"Dear child, my Laeta, must you? Is it right
To beard a lion in his lair at night,
When sinister the aspect and the hour?"

"Ah yes!" she cried, and laid her
tender hands

On his square shoulders, "I must show the truth
Where previously the burden of a lie
Was laid on me, unconscious of it! What
Could chance befall when I have feared nor man
Nor beast, by night and day, so long as God
Is with me; and if lairs there be, and beasts,
Why should I fear?... Is not Daniel's God
As present as He was when lions' dens
Were not more loathsome than some houses now,
Where prostitution is so deadly rife?
And are those angels chained that closed the
mouths

Of unsouled, savage hordes? Ah, Rupert mine,
Mistake me not! I go this night to prove
My innocence, and by my faith in good
Mayhap to turn to gracious ways that mood
Of cynical and scoffing worldliness.

Sir Hedley were a better man had not
Some woman scorned his love, and lowered him
In his false self-esteem.

The warp and woof
Of Fate's big weaving are thus patterned here—
Those lives that go from end to bitter end,
The warp; and those that cross continually,
The woof; though, jesting in half-earnest, all
The woof should be the warp, for thus they shrink
The best of souls upon themselves. . . And so
I pray you trust my quest and me to Heav'n,
And give me benison with this last kiss!"

* * Then Silence hid them close, for drew they
nigh

To Love's lone Temple, from whose holiness
She'd fain exile e'en angels,—these her words,
"And bar the sanctu'ry to all save God!"

Nisi dominus frustra.

The mullioned panes lent opals of all hues
For queer, fantastic mingling on the tiles
That paved the loggia of Alnaschar Hall;
And coloured rays between the pillars streamed
To flash, at rest, on every silver mount
Of harnessed horses, halted by the steps!

The keeper of the Lodge had rung therefrom,
And to this summons, wide the portal stood
In cheery welcome of who chanced to call!

Sir Hedley's footman bowed his defer-
ence

When Laeta's name was told, and ascertained
Without delay, his master's willingness
To instantly receive her.

So he led,
Through spacious lounges, this fair, unveiled
guest,

Announcing her at length, in bated tones,
Then noiselessly withdrew.

 Their greetings passed

With nervousness of manner barely hid;
She signed she would not take the proffered seat,
Whereat Sir Hedley laughed, and eyed askance
The mocking timepiece. "Is this joy," he said,
"Scarce yielded me than it removes itself?
Enlighten me, sweet lady, why I am
Thus chosen from the myriads of moons
Revolving round your system?... Musing here
But forty seconds past, I faced again
The fading Sunset, when you watched with me,
And lo! Dawn broke!—or else, perchance, my
 thought
Runs hotly in pursuit of happy dreams!"

And Laeta answered—"Short the time between
The sunset we both saw to-night, and now,
Yet would it had been lessened by three hours,
Since I have heard therein what sorely
 wounds!...

You doubt my innocence—permit me speech!
—The wound is not so much that *you* doubt,—
 you,

By whom a revelation of your heart was made
When you confided your great woe to me,
But hurt am I—ah! little can you gauge
The bitterness, the cold brutality,
The suff'ring in my hurt!—that you could speak
Of your base doubt to men you deem your
 friends!...

Nay, grant me just these few words more!... The
 wound
Becomes intol'able when you impute
A slander, almost, to Lord Cholmondeley's name!"

Then Laeta, by a gesture, bade him speak.

Sir Hedley stood erect and tall beside
The table which divided them; and now
His slender artist-fingers gripped its edge
As if his motive was to crush the wood.

“What spoke I of, to-night, as on we
sped
To reach the kindled heart of Nature’s God—
Was it the commune, think you, of a man
Who shares ideals for a passing jest?
I spoke so, Lady Laeta, since I knew
That one grand woman in the universe
Held marriage sacred, and her home a shrine!
An I deserve the pain—ah, pardon me!—
It stabs no softer that you doubted me
When my full confidence had been my judge!
Last night, because my utmost test had failed
To prove you wanton, I braved scoffs and jeers
From men who made a boast among themselves
(And I was of like mind till recently!)
That never had they found a holy mind
’Neath woman’s surface of urbanity;
Though in such vindication I have failed
If now you come to me, of true report!”

He drew her gaze to his, as if to learn
Therefrom, without requiring aught of speech,
The rumour of his so dishon’ring her.
And she, the tenseness at an end, relaxed
Her attitude avenging, and reached out
A hand: “Forgive me that to Doubt I stoop’d,
—Yet Gossip begs in tattered robes of Truth,
Admitting no disguise. And I confess
That I perceived allusion, scarce concealed,
In your remark concerning childless homes!...
(May God, not you, forgive me if I, now,
Destroy regenerated trust in us!)
Sir Hedley, in our bliss a life advened,
Which was not when a summer more had come;
And since—the choice was given to my lord

To rock a cradle or to make a grave;
 Anon he chose, and fell the lot to me!"
 The man on one knee bent impulsively
 And lifted to his lips her white robe's hem:
 "Be praise to God for that," he breathed, "and
 for

The privilege He grants me, knowing her
 Whom verily He is but lending us.

Milady, may I rectify this wrong
 That least I had desired, by audience
 With Rupert Cholmondeley ere another hour?"
 Then, rising, looked awhile on her pale face,
 For she was wrapt in contemplation of
 A painting exquisite, a fair-hair'd girl,
 (Of Orme's affianced bride, who broke her troth
 Whilst yet the Hall was building—hence the name
 'Alnaschar!' signifying ruined hopes
 That Fate had shattered when a soul was staked!)
 Nor heeded him until he asked again!
 So turned sad-eyed, toward him. "Drive with
 me,

The carriage has been waiting; but there's still
 An unsolved mystery. Why bear with grief
 Continuously? Her Grace's portrait should
 Not merit such consideration now!"

Around on it he swung, his lips asmile,
 "I'll warrant you 'tis more an effigy
 That Indolence prevents from reaching ash!
 But now I'm minded to drive forth the bad,
 Since Eden's angel helps me!... There the fire,
 And here the picture!... Prithee do the deed
 Which to a long list of gratuities
 Will add another!" and he laughed aloud,
 "'Twere fittest that a man's divinity
 Should cast the stone at earth's poor sordidness!"

* * * *

The painted, haughty eyes stared fixedly
 At her who shrank before this needless task

That her own question now required of her.
 "I cannot burn it! Let it rest!...I shall
 Not voice again my follies! We should see
 The canvas writhing, twisting, hideous—
 Ask aught of me but this!"

Then Hedley cast
 The thing away. "Your presence makes it seem
 A hallowed office, which I purpose not!
 So now, I come with you, and all is well!"
 But Laeta tarried, musing on these words
 And found them satisfying, for her tone
 Held tranquil dignity. "A solemn rite
 Should sanctify the object! Why destroy
 In malice or in anger what one may
 Consign more truly to a symbol'd Past?
 Therefore, methinks, 'twere well to light the pyre
 If mitigation of destruction lies
 In my weak presence to officiate!"
 And here she took the portrait, holding it
 At trembling arm's-length, (for its weight was
 big!),

Addressing it compass'nately! "Far off
 Is hate from him, and pity! But 'tis best
 That his brave soul should lose its carking sense
 That your poor idyll was half-humourous.
 May Fate—whom I call God!—be kind to you
 Nor even recompense as once did you
 Who turned the contents of the Cup of Love,
 Of Hope's elixir, to a brimming draught
 Of wormwood vintage! Peace descend on you,
 And peace on him who fights these years of
 pain!....

...Be speedy, kindly flames, and purify
 What's left to him—Remembrance bitter-sweet!"

She laid it on the logs with reverence,
 And gently screened it from him, by her cloak,
 To save a chance recall of tortured paint;

LAETA

Then forth they fared in silent sympathy,
This gracious woman, full of spir'tual love,
And he, Sir Hedley, of Alnaschar Hall!

Sic itur ad astra.

Pale moonlight crept beneath the dark-trunk'd
 pines
To scatter strings of pearls from blade to blade
Of all the host of spears that grassed the earth,
When, trotting swiftly, came Lord Cholmondeley's
 bays,
And in the carriage, silent each—the twain.

The Lady Laeta bade the grooms remain,
To wait her guest's return—for Rupert's Wood
Lay distant fully two miles from the Hall,
And now was reached, disclosing to their sight
The slow, delib'rate pacing to and fro
Of Cholmondeley, in the vestibule. . . . He came
To greet his wife most eagerly, and she
Inclined her shapely head tow'rd Hedley Orme.

"A very welcome guest, my lord," she said,
"And one whom Canker Rumour has ensnared.
Be pleased to lead the way to warmth and light,
For chill the air, and very low the moon."
Then answered Rupert happily, "The night
Is surely kind, since thus it hastens you,
My Lady Laeta, to illuminate
Where all was dark and cold while you were
 hid."

She laughed, protesting, that he flattered her,
Or else implied his own resource was small,
Whereat the two men joined her gaiety;
And so all awkwardness was glossed with mirth.
A fateful shadow dwelt in Laeta's eyes
Which warned Sir Hedley to be brief, wherefore

He struck the button from a foil of words
 And plunged his point to kill the heart of Care,
 With neither feint nor parry: this his thrust:
 "Accused am I of what I truly deem
 A sacrilege! Yet, had the charge been based
 A year ago, 'twould nearly be the truth;
 But twelve-months taught me such, that my chief
 guilt

Is giving evidence of what I learnt,
 Which dullards have contorted to my shame!
 ... Whilst proving that my faith in womankind
 Had been re-born of one pure Innocent,
 I named the Lady Cholmondeley as a charm
 Invincible by e'en Beelzebub,
 Who doubtless, therefore, seeks this victory
 Against her blessedness through crippled Truth."

Sir Hedley ceased, and Laeta's husband bent
 To kiss her hand, love's worship in the act,
 And sorrowfully spoke. "Though we restore
 The veriest of Truth to those same men,
 I nevermore may stifle in my breast
 The strong disquiet of my own weak trust!
 Since I am mated with this lofty soul,
 My fears were base indeed, when I believed
 Her choice of your companionship was made
 O'er-hastily, and therefore was unwise.
 My knowledge of my wife's discernments clear,
 And of her influence to raise men's thought,
 Had served me truer had I trusted more!
 Your pardon I desire, Sir Hedley Orme,
 That I gave credence to those tales afloat
 Which made your ways seem tending viciously!..
 And Life itself at Laeta's hands I crave!"
 So saying, bowed his head, to token he
 Awaited sentence, which my lady passed
 By holding both her willing hands to him
 And suff'ring him, before their guest, to lift
 The latch of their lone sanctu'ry... And Orme

Turned shortly to the fire, for sudden pain
Dashed mists of dimness sharp across his eyes,
And blinded him to their great wedded bliss,—
Though not until those sacred altar-fires
Had cast their reflex on each tender face.

But love, so paramount, full swiftly guessed
What mighty strife the empty heart required
In hushing, agonised, the muffled tread
Of its poor, pallid ghost. . . Together they
Drew near, and closer yet, till Laeta touched
The drooping shoulders with a ling'ring hand,
And Cholmondeley's quiet tones, encouraging—
Though ignorant of all the tragedy—
Now sought these reaches of vast solitude,
And fed Orme's famished soul with comfort
warm.

So turned he, unashamed that Grief sate dark
Upon his heavy lids, and said to them,
"Some lives seem rooted so in God, that they
Are needing no restraint; no falling leaf
In Winter-time; no pruner's shears; no wind
From chilly, doubt-swept plains, to cool
Their ardent grace: and some—a few—there be,
With symmetry of beauty like the palm;
These rear their stately heads to be sun-kissed
From dawn, till night has fall'n, yet heat but
draws
Their subtlest fragrance, nor destroys their
bloom;

(Of such exquisite growth milady is!)
And other trees cross-grain from struggling seeds,
Though gnarls are not inborn, but slow evolved
By adverse processes; their fruit is sour
Because no sunlight favours them, and cold
Is ev'ry breeze; unyielding are they, hard
As iron, gaunt, impregnable; and such
Am I, though once transplanted to a soil,
As free and pure as yours, by Love's own hand!

LAETA

My lord, I have but one hope left to me;
I pray you'll not withdraw it; and 'tis this:—
By growing upwards I may reach the sun
That bathes the palm top in soft radiance,
And groping deeper, thro' earth's mystery,
My roots may twine about those radicles
That clench life's fundamentals and rear the group
First-named—whereof Lord Cholmondeley is the
chief!"

Penetralia.

Amid a splendour transient, one eve
An amber sun slipped low behind the hills;
His fingers dripped thin, molten gold across
The snow-white clouds, arrested, motionless:
From peak to peak his bounty shed itself,
And haloed e'en the dismal, frowning cowl
That one of earth's tall tree-clad summits wore:
...The vast horizon lifted lambent grey
To touch a precious crown of sarcolite:
And slower beat the sapphire sea's great pulse!

Like priestess worshipping her deity
A beauteous counter-part of Laeta stood,
Athrill with all this mighty majesty!
And stood a man, whose love shone from his eyes,
His soul not surer moved by her sweet grace
Than by the Presence of the Master Hand.

They were one flesh, the man and maid, and Orme
Forever marvelled that such joy was his,
Though Cholmondeley's bride had proved the fal-
lacy
Of doubting marriage bonds but fostered joy.
...Sir Hedley's noble manhood lay engraved
On all his lineaments; his life was good,
His ideals high, and ev'ry act benign.

LAETA

He gave to his dear consort such a smile
As dwarfed the golden marvel of the sky,
And made its glory wan and dim beside;
Then speech most eloquent she heard, his tones
A liquid melody; and charm was lent
By witcheries of dusk, this tribute rare,—
Set well in his rich casket of grave speech.
“My wife, most precious of all gifts on earth,
Yon riot of gold colour, heaven-bound,
Contains less alchemy than may be found
In Laeta’s smallest word. I gild my steel,
From casque to spur, in her resolve, and foes
Of deadliest pow’r I overthrew when thus
I tilted with her lance of courage true.
My purpose gained the strength of multitudes,
For she had braced my soul, afresh, to fight
And win! Moreover, when part-conqueror,
She recompensed my tourney, by the deed
Of friendship’s greatest favour—so I came
To know the twin of gracious Laeta, not
Less gracious, not less fair, but even more
Deserving of man’s homage, aye and aye.
... You women hold the fire within yourselves
That makes the fragrant incense rise from us,
A constant smoke to mark our pilgrimage!
Were all the spheres attuned to my name,
And I should die, no fitter monument,
None braver, none more splendid, could I ask
Than this—a circlet of fine gold, set on
A palm of victory, to be inscribed
‘The tomb of Laeta’s knight. She bade him joust
Against a sorry Fate—wherefore he won!’ ”

With simple dignity he put his arms
About her slender form, and drew her head
To rest upon his shoulder, kissing her.
“What radiance your love has wrapt me in,
Ethereal, amazing! O Christine,
The gentlest dove of peace! I worship you

LAETA

With all a strong man's homage of the pure!
If Laeta's name should mark my finished course,
The value of whate'er be best in life
Will bear your seal, set thereon by your lips.
Sweet, cling to me; assure me you believe!
My heart is hungry for love's liturgy!"

And Christine spoke: "God reigns supreme, but
next

In right of fealty are you, and next,
My liege again, and always next are you—
God's priest to guard my sacrifice to Love!
Behold the rising Moon! 'Tis so your Care
Has reached the fastnesses in this, my heart,
And driven shadows forth. My Galahad,
A woman's holiness is rarely giv'n
To such heroic keeping as is yours!
May Love inspire you to your latest sigh,
And may we not be separate in Death!"
...Then slowly entered they Alnaschar Hall,
Whose inner shrine was built on Laeta's faith,
A vital tribute to God's providence.

FRAGMENTS

THE AUSTRALIAN FLEET

(Sydney, October 4th, 1913.)

Up from the Dawn they came,
 Called in the Mother's name,
 Called for an island's fame,
 First of our Navy!

Glad sobs in throats of men,
Sad throbs from hearts of men,
Tears among cheers of men,
 Welcome our Navy!

Up from the Sun they came,
 Heedless of Dawn's quick flame,
 —'Twill be to foes the same—
 Our gallant Navy.

Loud cheers from throats of men,
Proud fears in hearts of men,
Tears, the full joy of men,
 Honour our Navy!

From Sun to Sun they've come,
 Calling Australia "Home,"
 Our sons, (yet British some,)
 Manning our Navy.

Meet is its number—seven,
Meet—for the Seas are seven! . . .
 Fleet, this auspicious Heaven
 Signs for our Navy!

AILEEN—A DEBUTANTE

So supple, stately, sweeping,
Her careless grace,
Shy joy in grey eyes leaping,
In sweet, soft face:
And Autumn tints the clinging
Of tend'rest curl,
See Winter snow-flakes winging
To neck of pearl!

A Summer rose-bud curving
Her mouth so red!
And arms and shoulders swerving,
To poise a head
In Autumn's beauty crowning
The Winter's snow,
Which meets a pure white gowning
Of Spring, below.

If Summer has her setting
Of Autumn red,
In flash of spangled fretting
Is Spring-time wed!
Dazzling, shim'ring, twinkling,
In Dance's maze,
Her tiny feet are blinking
At new-born Days!

A VIGNETTE

The sun to-night was flaunting
His robe of orange hue,
Through a field of purple daisies,
(With never a one to rue!)
When an old gum stretched her arms up
To touch his splendid ring,
And rimmed his robe in black embrace,
'Mid fleecy ~~fields~~ of daisy lace— *folds*
A wonderful, beautiful thing!

DELORAINÉ

O, the rosebuds are out, and the swallows are high,
 (Sing hey aho, hey aho hey,)

O, the barley is ripe and the reaping is nigh,
 (Hey, aho, hey ahey ho,)

O, the river is tripping and dancing along,
 (Hey, aho, hey aho hey.)

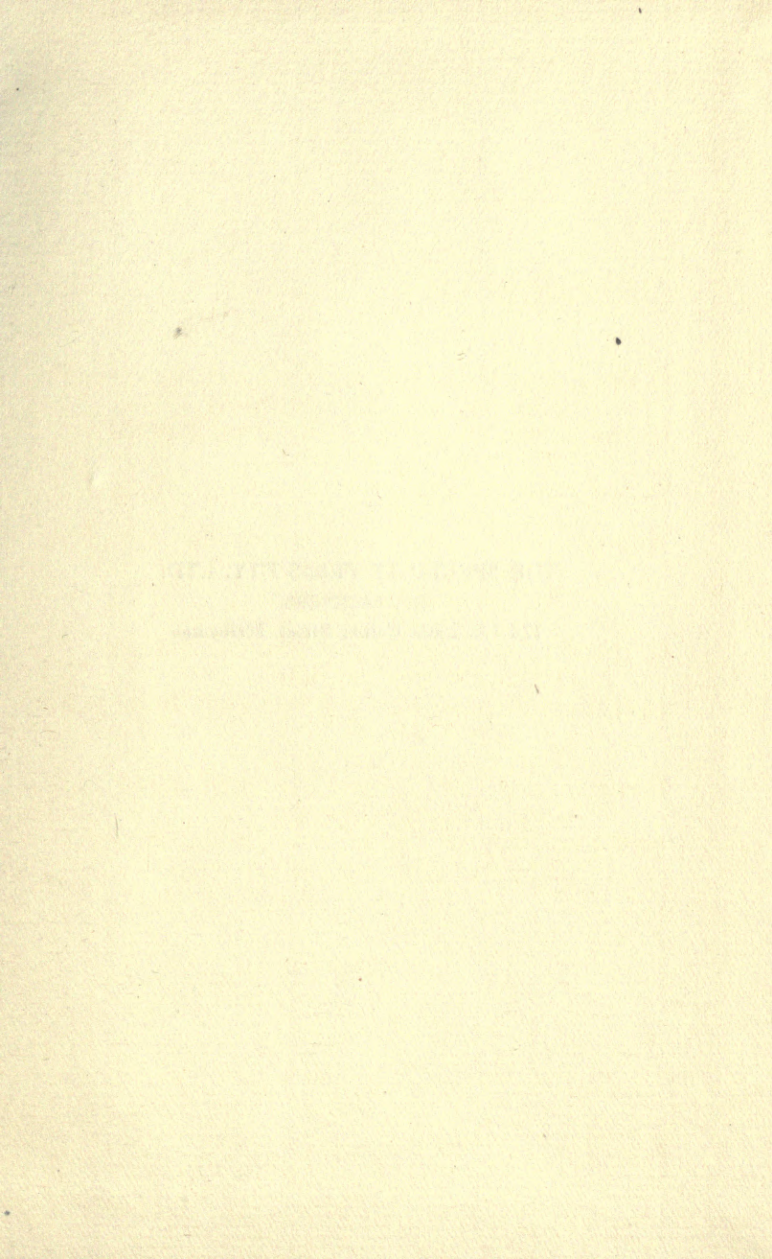
And the willows are swaying to the lilt of its
 Song;
 (Hey aho, hey ahey ho.)

O, the sky is as tender and sweet as a bride,
 (Hey, aho, hey aho hey,)

And the sun shines his brightest right here by my
 side,
 (Hey aho, hey ahey ho,)

For my Lady has plighted her troth to her Love,
 (Hey, aho, hey aho hey,)

And the Glory of life is Around and Above,
 (Sing hey aho, hey nonny hey.)



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